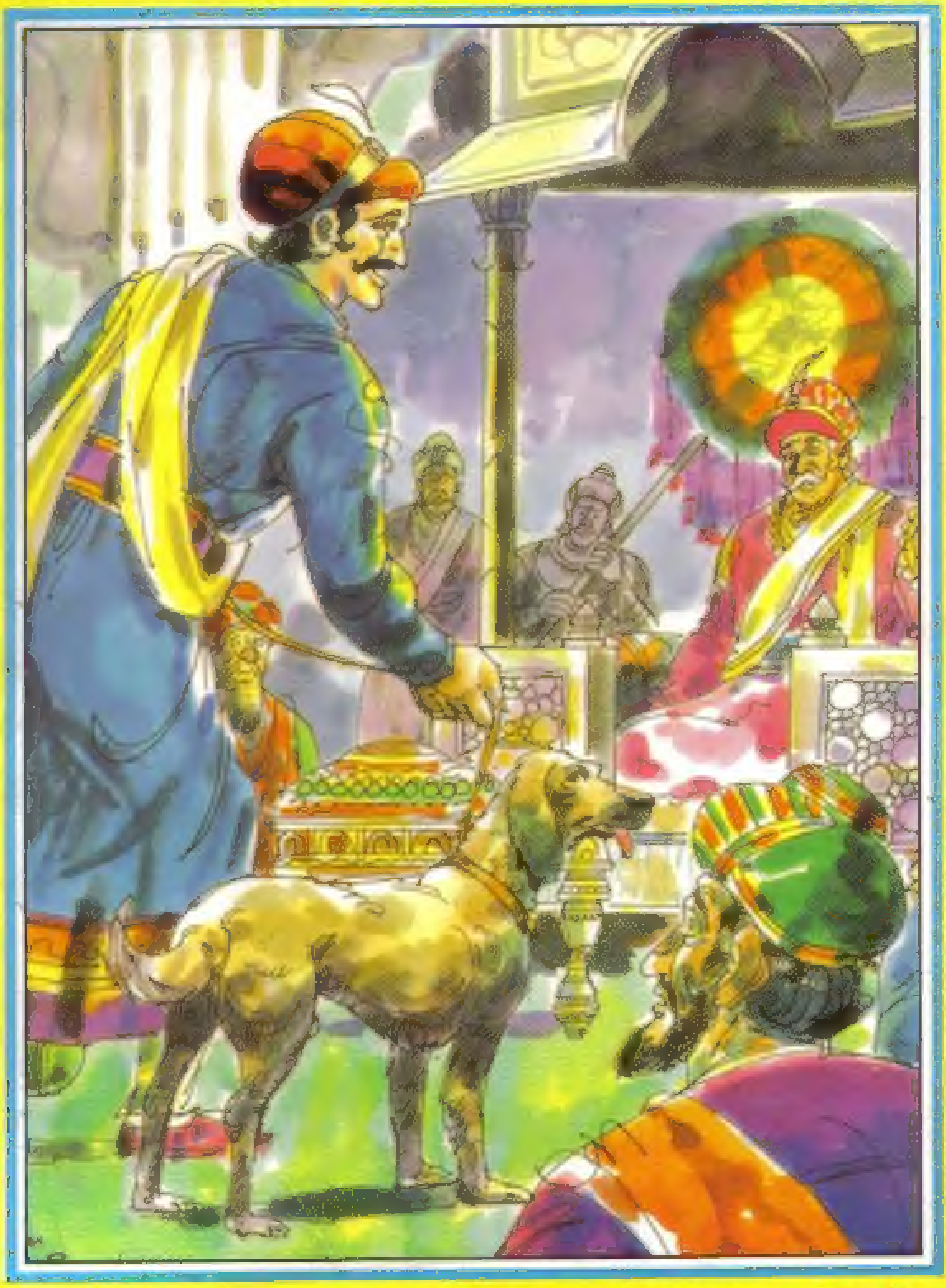
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

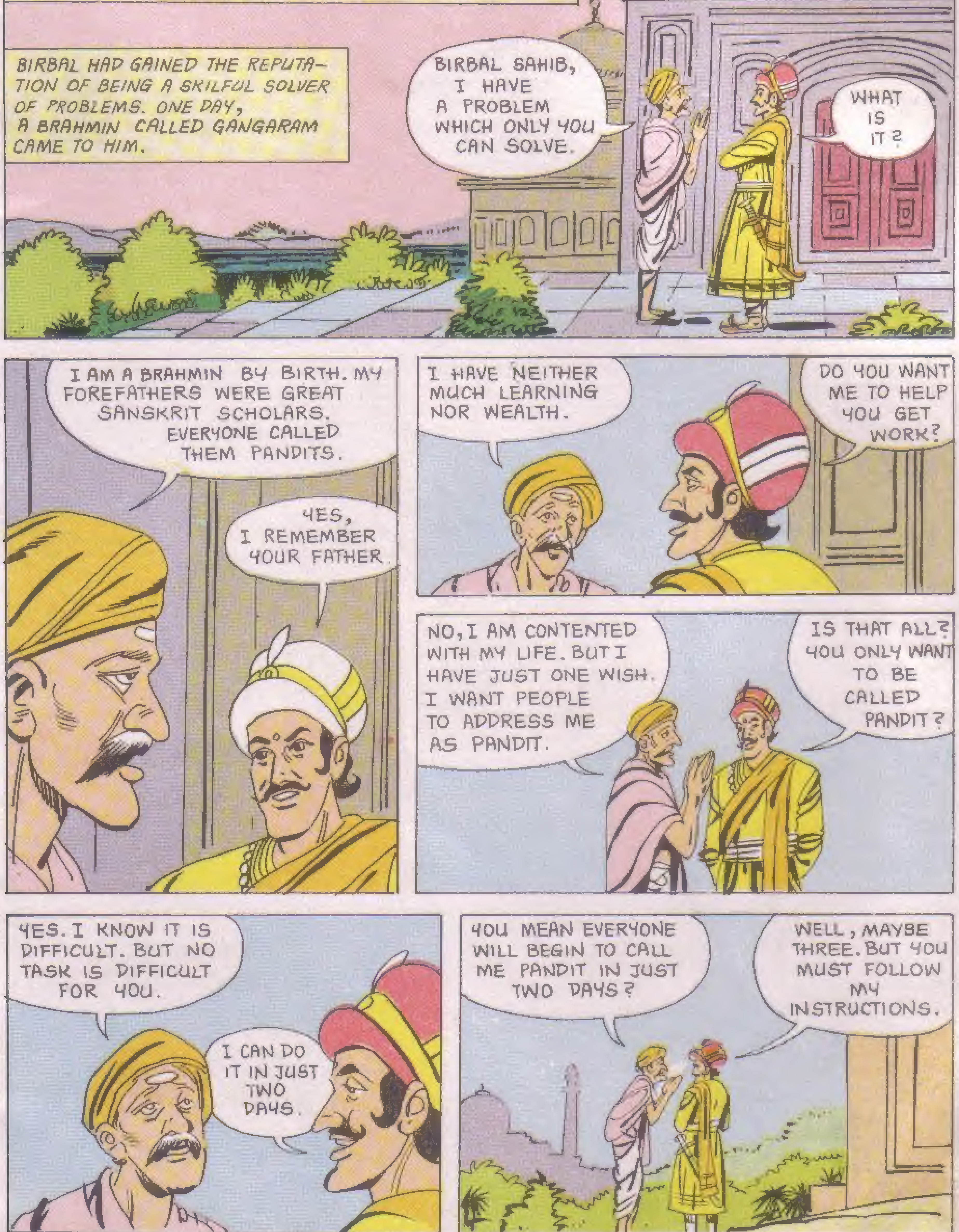
# The Inimitable Birbal

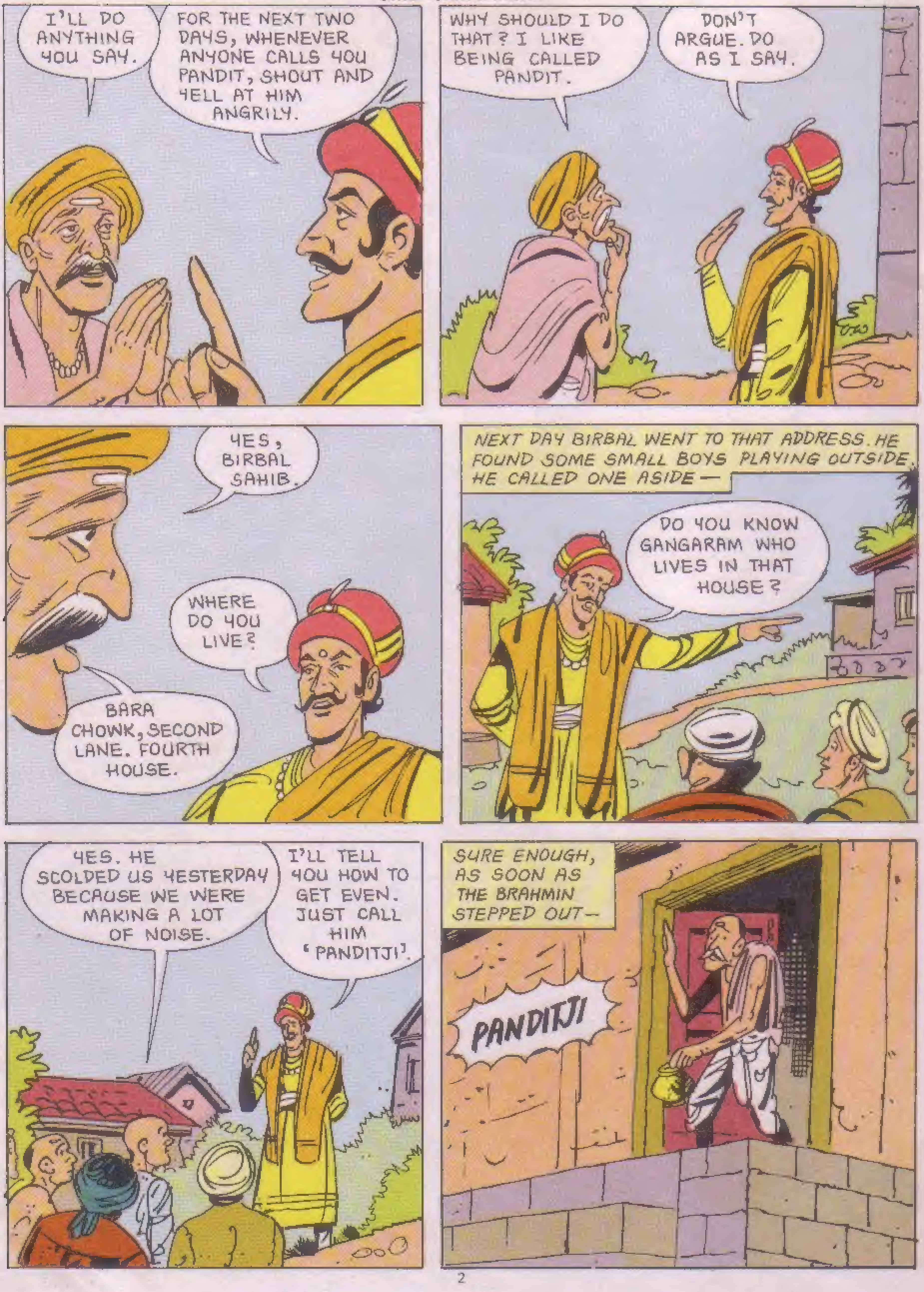
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Amar Chitra Katha: the Glorious Heritage of India

# PANDIT GANGARAM




I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU SAY.
FOR THE NEXT TWO DAYS, WHENEVER ANYONE CALLS YOU PANDIT, SHOUT AND YELL AT HIM ANGRILY.
WHY SHOULD I DO THAT? I LIKE BEING CALLED PANDIT.
DON'T ARGUE. DO AS I SAY.
YES, BIRBAL SAHIB.
WHERE DO YOU LIVE?
BARA CHOWK, SECOND LANE. FOURTH HOUSE.
NEXT DAY BIRBAL WENT TO THAT ADDRESS. HE FOUND SOME SMALL BOYS PLAYING OUTSIDE. HE CALLED ONE ASIDE —
DO YOU KNOW GANGARAM WHO LIVES IN THAT HOUSE?
YES. HE SCOLDED US YESTERDAY BECAUSE WE WERE MAKING A LOT OF NOISE.
I'LL TELL YOU HOW TO GET EVEN. JUST CALL HIM 'PANDITJI'.
SURE ENOUGH, AS SOON AS THE BRAHMIN STEPPED OUT—
PANDITJI


REMEMBERING BIRBAL'S WORDS, GANGARAM POUNCED ON THE BOY.
YOU... HOW DARE YOU CALL ME THAT.
NOW THE OTHER BOYS TOOK UP THE CUE.
PANDITJI!
OHH PANDITJI!
EACH TIME THEY SHOUTED, GANGARAM WOULD CHASE THEM, BRANDISHING HIS STICK.
WAIT TILL I CATCH YOU!
IT BECAME A POPULAR PASTIME IN BARA CHOWK.
YOU WANT TO HAVE SOME FUN? JUST CALL THAT MAN 'PANDITJI!'
SOON, HOWEVER, THEY TIRED OF THE GAME BECAUSE GANGARAM STOPPED ABUSING THEM.
THE GAME STOPPED, BUT THE NAME STUCK.
I HAVE TO GIVE THESE SWEETS TO GANGARAM IN THIS STREET. WHICH IS HIS HOUSE?
DON'T YOU KNOW PANDITJI'S HOUSE? HERE IT IS!


AND CURRY OF COURSE
ONE DAY AKBAR CALLED FOR BIRBAL.
BIRBAL, YOU HAD BEEN TO A WEDDING YESTERDAY.
WHAT DID YOU EAT, BIRBAL?
OH! I HAD LADDUS, PHIRNI, PULAO, HMM...
WHAT ELSE?
LET ME TRY TO REMEMBER. YES, THERE WAS KHEER AS WELL AS BIRYANI.
WHAT ELSE, BIRBAL?
OH, THERE WERE SO MANY THINGS LIKE...
JUST THEN, A COURTIER INTERRUPTED WITH AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR THE EMPEROR, AND THE CONVERSATION REMAINED UNFINISHED. NEXT DAY IN THE DURBAR, AKBAR WANTED TO TEST BIRBAL'S MEMORY. HE TURNED TO HIM –
WHAT ELSE, BIRBAL?
BIRBAL REALISED THAT AKBAR WAS REFERRING TO THE CONVERSATION OF THE PREVIOUS DAY. PROMPTLY HE SAID –
AND CURRY, OF COURSE.

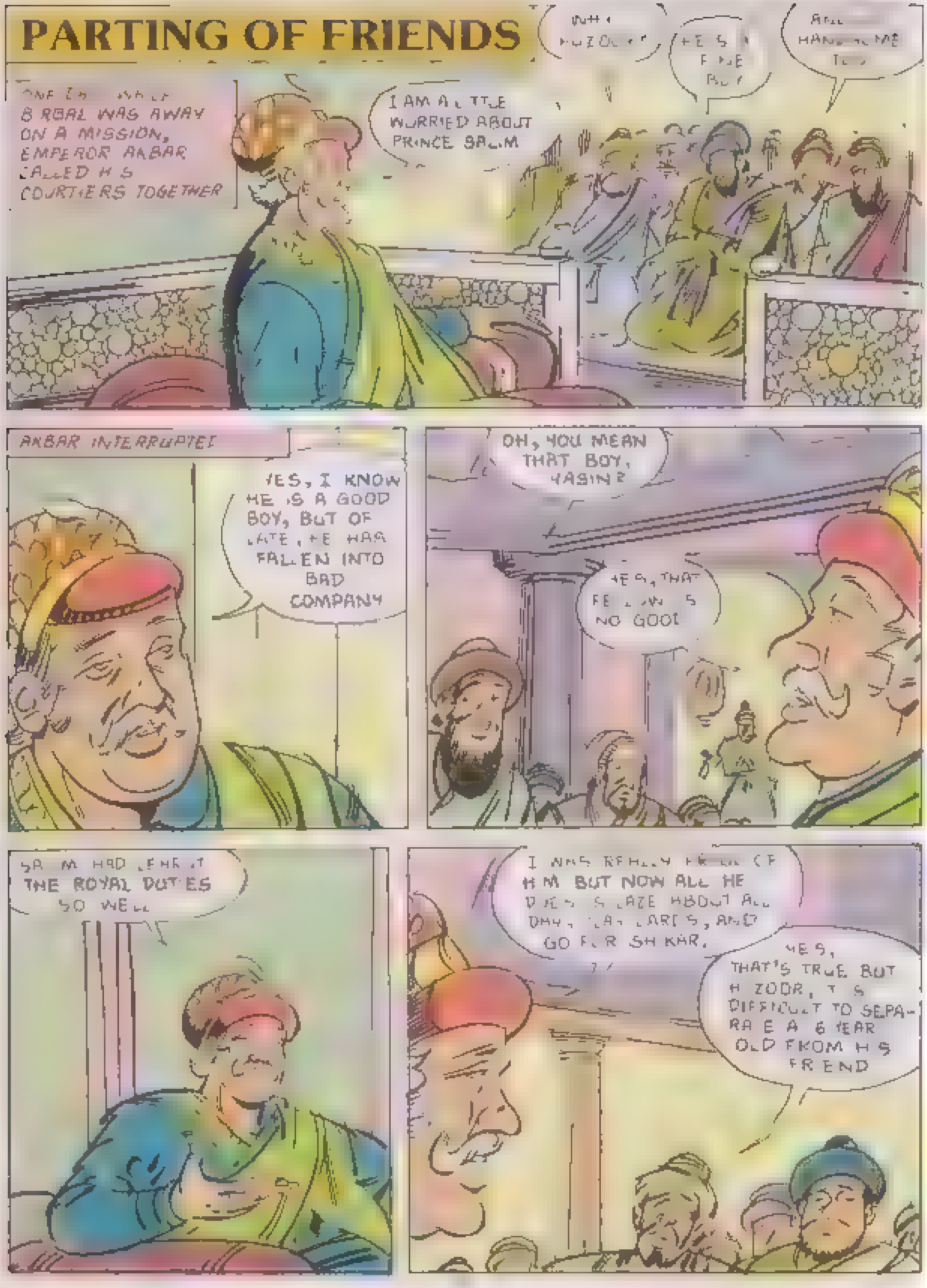

AKBAR WAS IMMENSELY PLEASED.
WAH! BIRBAL. YOU ARE INDEED GREAT. HERE! TAKE THIS PEARL NECKLACE.
THE COURTIERS PRESENT WERE PERPLEXED.
WHY, THE KING MUST REALLY BE FOND OF CURRY. HE GAVE BIRBAL A PRESENT JUST FOR MENTIONING THE WORD CURRY.
AFTER THE COURT HAD DISPERSED, THEY GOT TOGETHER FOR DISCUSSIONS.
WE MUST BRING THE BEST CURRY FOR THE EMPEROR TOMORROW.
YES, LOTS OF IT.
SURELY HE WILL REWARD US TOO.
THE NEXT DAY THEY ARRIVED IN THE DURBAR WITH THEIR SERVANTS CARRYING HUGE URNS OF CURRY ON THEIR HEADS.
WHAT'S ALL THIS? WHAT ARE THESE MEN CARRYING TO THE COURT?
WE HAVE BROUGHT CURRY FOR YOU, JAHANPANAH. WE KNOW NOW HOW MUCH YOU LIKE IT.
AKBAR UNDERSTOOD AT ONCE—
YOU FOOLS! WHAT BIRBAL SAID YESTERDAY WAS IN ANOTHER CONTEXT. AS A PUNISHMENT FOR YOUR STUPIDITY I WILL MAKE YOU EAT ALL THIS CURRY JUST NOW.
FORGIVE US! WE WILL NOT ACT IN HASTE NEXT TIME.
BIRBAL HAD A GOOD LAUGH.


THE ONLY ROOSTER
AKBAR LOVED TO PLAY HARMLESS TRICKS ON BIRBAL—
SO MANY TIMES HAVE I TRIED TO TRAP HIM, BUT HE ALWAYS GETS THE BETTER OF ME.
THIS TIME I WILL GET EVEN WITH HIM.
THE NEXT DAY AT THE COURT, HE SENT BIRBAL ON AN ERRAND. ADDRESSING THE REST OF THE COURTIERS, AKBAR SAID—
HERE IS A BASKET OF EGGS. I WANT EACH ONE OF YOU TO TAKE AN EGG AND KEEP IT HIDDEN.
LATER, WHEN I ASK YOU TO DIVE INTO THE POOL, YOU MUST PRETEND YOU FOUND IT THERE. UNDERSTOOD?
YES, JAHANPANAH
QUEER IDEAS HIS MAJESTY HAS.
BETTER HUMOUR HIM AND DO AS HE SAYS.
MUST BE A NEW GAME HE HAS THOUGHT OF.
BUT WHEN BIRBAL RETURNED TO THE COURT, THEY UNDERSTOOD.
BIRBAL, YESTERDAY I HAD A STRANGE DREAM. FROM IT I GOT AN EXCELLENT IDEA FOR TESTING THE ABILITIES OF THE MEN OF MY COURT.

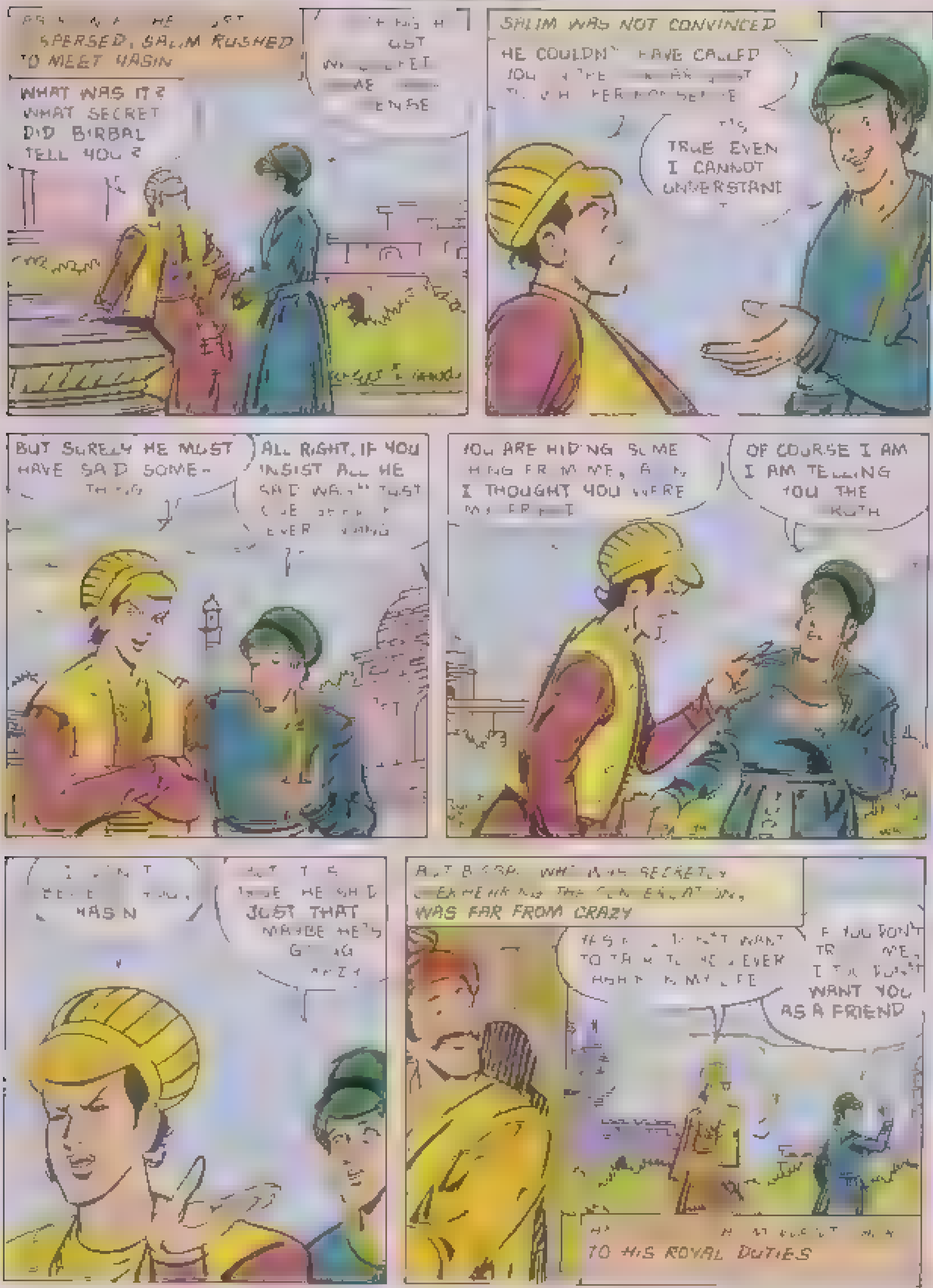

ALL OF YOU MUST DIVE INTO THE POND IN THE GARDEN.
THE GENUINE MEN WILL FIND AN EGG IN IT. IF YOU COME OUT WITHOUT AN EGG, IT WOULD MEAN YOU ARE NOT RELIABLE.
AHA! THE EMPEROR WANTS TO PUT BIRBAL IN HIS PLACE.
WHAT FUN! EVERY TIME BIRBAL MAKES US LOOK SILLY. TODAY IT IS HIS TURN.
BIRBAL SAW THEM WHISPERING.
SOMETHING IS UP! I AM SURE THE EMPEROR IS UP TO ONE OF HIS TRICKS.
ONE BY ONE, THE COURTIERS DIVED INTO THE POOL.
HERE, JAHANPANAH, I HAVE THE EGG.


ME TOO!
NOW IT'S YOUR TURN, BIRBAL.
I SUPPOSE THERE MUST BE A BASKET OF EGGS AT THE BOTTOM.
WHAT WILL BIRBAL DO? HE HAS NO EGG.
SERVES HIM RIGHT. THE POMPOUS FELLOW!
HE'LL BE THE ODD MAN OUT.
COME ON, BIRBAL!
LET'S SEE YOU AND YOUR EGG.
HURRY UP, BIRBAL.
WHEN HE DIVED IN—
THERE'S NOTHING HERE! HE MUST BE TRYING TO TRICK ME.
BIRBAL CAME OUT EMPTY-HANDED FROM THE POOL.


AFTER SHAKING THE WATER OFF HIS BODY, HE STOOD UP.
COCK-A-DOODLE DOO! COCK-A-DOODLE DOO!
WHERE'S YOUR EGG, BIRBAL? WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU CROWING FOR?
BIRBAL REPLIED —
SURELY YOU KNOW THAT ONLY HENS LAY EGGS, NOT COCKS.
YOU HAVE A LARGE BROOD OF HENS, HUZOOR.
BUT I AM THE ONLY ROOSTER!
THE COURTIERS FELT VERY EMBARRASSED.
HA HA! TRULY BIRBAL, YOU ARE REALLY ONE OF A KIND!

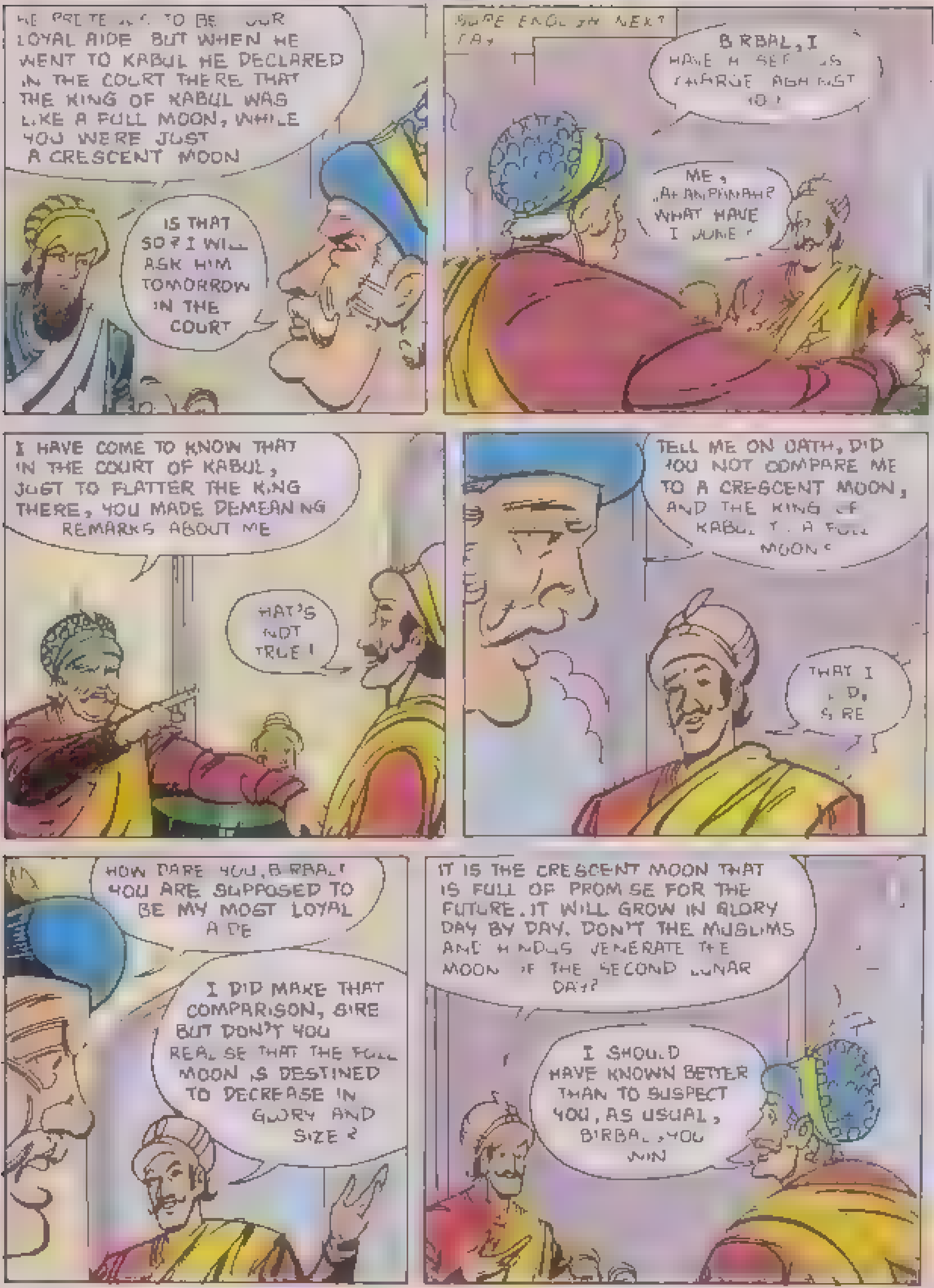

PARTING OF FRIENDS
EMPEROR AKBAR
CALLED HIS
COURTIERS TOGETHER
I AM A LITTLE
WORRIED ABOUT
PRINCE SALIM
AKBAR INTERRUPTED
YES, I KNOW HE IS A GOOD BOY, BUT OF LATE, HE HAS FALLEN INTO BAD COMPANY
OH, YOU MEAN THAT BOY, YASIN?
YES, THAT FELLOW IS NO GOOD
THE ROYAL DUTIES SO WELL
HIM BUT NOW ALL HE
GO FOR SHIKAR.
YES, THAT'S TRUE BUT HUZOOR, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEPARATE A 6 YEAR OLD FROM HIS FRIEND


THAT S WH I AM CONSULTING YOU AFTER AL , AS THE PR NCE, H S FUTURE S YOUR CONCERN TOO.
WE W L TRY T FIND A WAY
THINK OF A PLAN TO CORRECT THE PR NCE
HUZO R SEND YAS N AWAY TO ANOTHER PLACE.
NO, THAT WILL ONLY TURN SAL M AGAINST ME
WHY NOT TELL SAL M WHAT YOU THINK OF YASIN?
NO, THAT MIGHT MAKE SALIM MORE FOND H M
WHEN B RBAL RETURNED FROM HIS TRAVELS, AKBAR TURNED TO H M FOR HELP
YOU WANT TO SEPARATE THE TWO YOUNG MEN WHY, GIVE ME JUST TWO DAYS.
NEXT DAY, AT C RT, B RBA CAL E YAS N
BZZZZ
HE SA
NOW, DON'T BREATHE A WORD OF THIS TO ANYONE
B RBAL MUST BE GOING CRAZY HE JUST SA D JUST ONE SEED N EVERY MANGO"

SPERSED, SALIM RUSHED TO MEET YASIN
WHAT WAS IT? WHAT SECRET DID BIRBAL TELL YOU?
SALIM WAS NOT CONVINCED
HE COULDN'T HAVE CALLED YOU
TRUE EVEN I CANNOT UNDERSTAND
BUT SURELY HE MUST HAVE SAID SOME-THING
ALL RIGHT, IF YOU INSIST ALL HE
YOU ARE HIDING SOME
I THOUGHT YOU WERE
OF COURSE I AM I AM TELLING YOU THE
YASIN
JUST THAT MAYBE HE'S
WAS FAR FROM CRAZY
WANT YOU AS A FRIEND
TO HIS ROYAL DUTIES


THE PHASES OF THE MOON
ONCE AKBAR SENT BIRBAL TO KABUL ON A SECRET ROYAL MISSION.
BIRBAL TRIED TO MINGLE WITH THE LOCAL CROWD, BUT—
I SUSPECT THAT MAN! HE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE AN ORDINARY PERSON.
YES, THOUGH HE POSES TO BE ONE OF US, HE IS OBVIOUSLY AN OUTSIDER.
WHY, HE MUST BE A SPY.
LET'S REPORT HIM TO OUR KING.
THE KING ORDERED THE SUSPECTED SPY TO BE BROUGHT BEFORE HIM
TELL ME TRULY. WHO ARE YOU? WHY ARE YOU HERE?
I AM JUST A TRAVELLER.
I HAVE TRAVELLED THROUGH MANY KINGDOMS AND ARRIVED HERE.
IS THAT SO?
WELL, SINCE YOU HAVE TRAVELLED SO MUCH AND SEEN SO MUCH OF THE WORLD, TELL ME, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY RULE?


NO PHASE OF THE MOON CAN
HE IS LIKE THE
WEAK
I AM VERY PLEASED WITH YOU HERE TAKE THIS BAG OF COINS AS A GIFT
ARE
BIRBAL RETURNED TO DELHI BUT
THERE AT DIWAN-I-KHAS—
TELL ME, HUSSAIN KHAN. WHAT SECRET OF BIRBAL DO YOU POSSESS?
TO KABUL LAST MONTH
SENT HIM THERE SO WHAT?
BUT DO YOU KNOW WHAT HE
THE KING



LOYAL AIDE BUT WHEN HE WENT TO KABUL HE DECLARED IN THE COURT THERE THAT THE KING OF KABUL WAS LIKE A FULL MOON, WHILE YOU WERE JUST A CRESCENT MOON
IS THAT SO? I WILL ASK HIM TOMORROW IN THE COURT
SURE ENOUGH NEXT DAY
BIRBAL, I
ME, JAHANPANAH? WHAT HAVE I DONE?
I HAVE COME TO KNOW THAT IN THE COURT OF KABUL, JUST TO FLATTER THE KING THERE, YOU MADE DEMEANING REMARKS ABOUT ME
HAT'S NOT TRUE!
TELL ME ON OATH, DID YOU NOT COMPARE ME TO A CRESCENT MOON, AND THE KING OF
MOON?
THAT I
SIRE
HOW DARE YOU, BIRBAL! YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE MY MOST LOYAL AIDE
I DID MAKE THAT COMPARISON, SIRE BUT DON'T YOU REALISE THAT THE FULL MOON IS DESTINED TO DECREASE IN GLORY AND SIZE?
IT IS THE CRESCENT MOON THAT IS FULL OF PROMISE FOR THE FUTURE. IT WILL GROW IN GLORY DAY BY DAY. DON'T THE MUSLIMS AND HINDUS VENERATE THE MOON OF THE SECOND LUNAR DAY?
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO SUSPECT YOU. AS USUAL, BIRBAL, YOU WIN

# VALUE OF WASTE

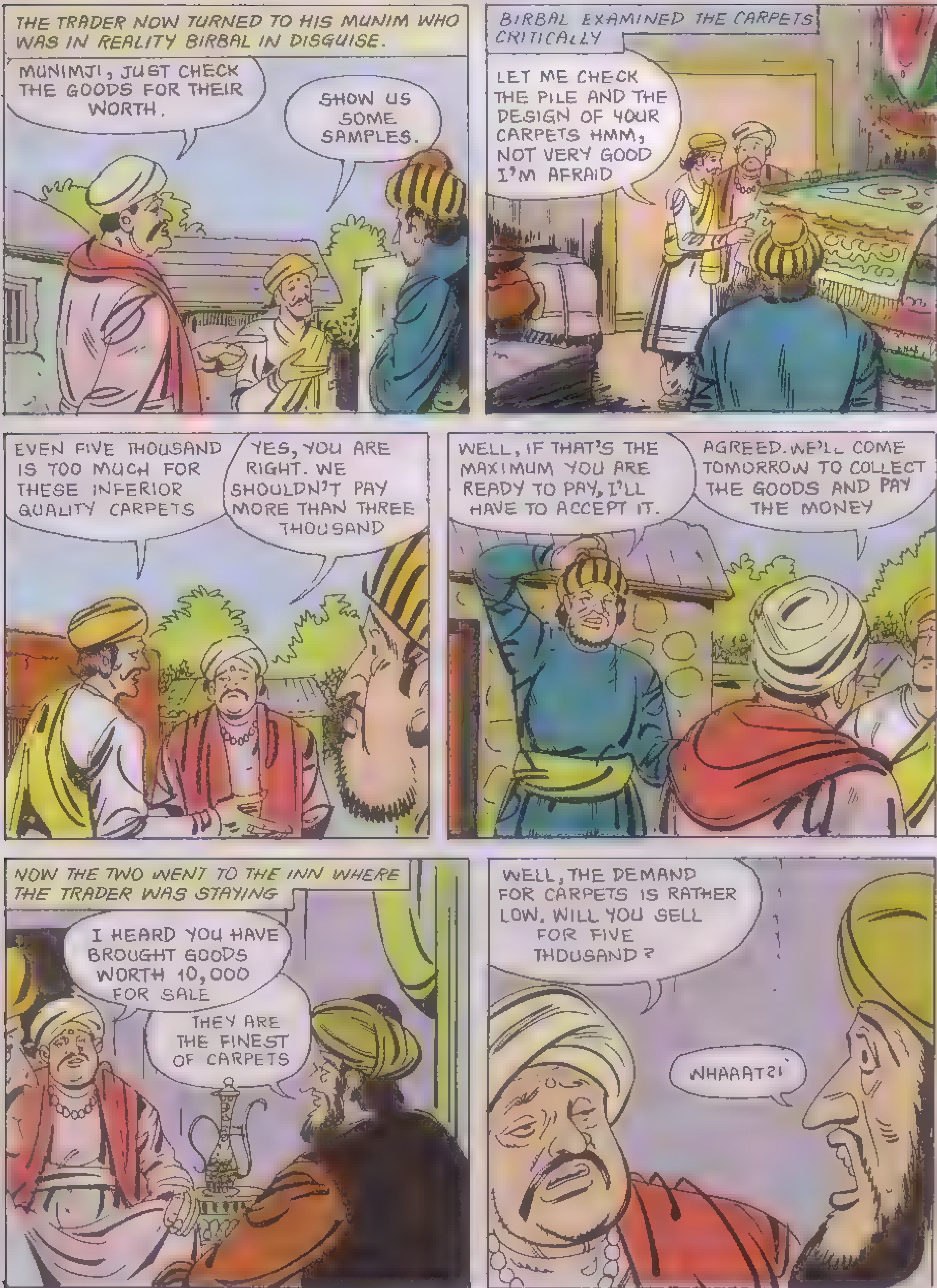


# THE TRUE OWNER



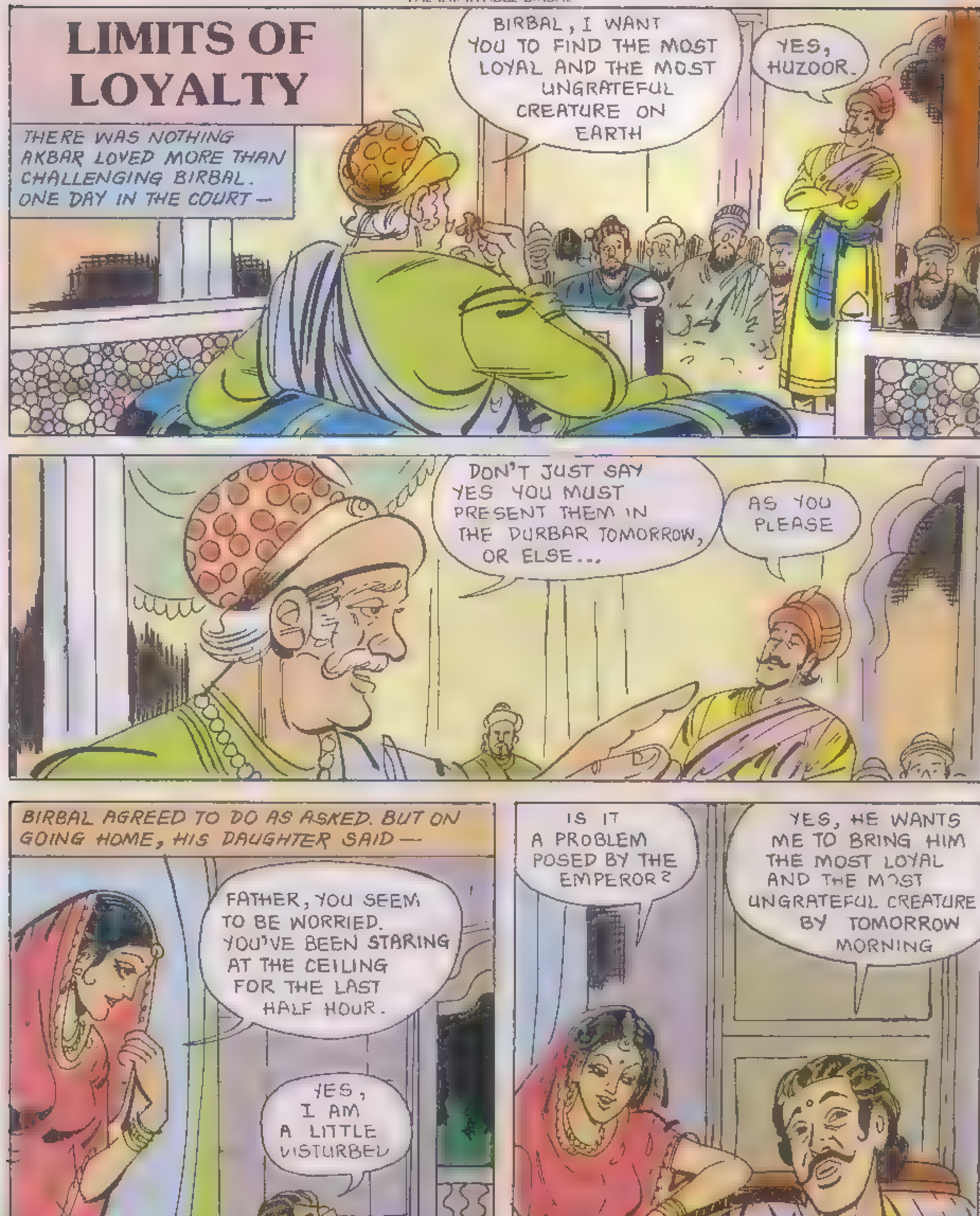

BIRBAL PAUSED FOR A WHILE
WE'LL SETTLE THE MATTER HERE IN THE COURT TOMORROW
AFTER THE COURT ADJOURNED, BIRBAL CHANGED HIS COURTIER'S CLOTHES TO THAT OF A MUNIM* AND WENT TO THE RIVERBANK WITH A FRIEND.
THERE, THE SECOND BOAT HE IS THE MAN. LET'S GO.
AS PLANNED EARLIER, HIS FRIEND BEGAN TO NEGOTIATE.
WHAT GOODS HAVE YOU TO SELL?
OH! THE FINEST PERSIAN CARPETS
ARE YOU PLANNING TO SELL YOUR THINGS HERE?
YES, IF POSSIBLE I HAVE GOODS WORTH TEN THOUSAND RUPEES
WELL, THE MARKET FOR CARPETS IS RATHER LOW IN DELHI THESE DAYS SO, IF YOU WANT TO SELL YOUR STUFF, I'LL TAKE IT FOR FIVE THOUSAND
FOR HALF THE PRICE?
THINK ABOUT IT AND LET ME KNOW
WAIT! WAIT! I'LL SELL IT FOR FIVE THOUSAND

* A CLERK


THE TRADER NOW TURNED TO HIS MUNIM WHO WAS IN REALITY BIRBAL IN DISGUISE.
MUNIMJI, JUST CHECK THE GOODS FOR THEIR WORTH.
SHOW US SOME SAMPLES.
BIRBAL EXAMINED THE CARPETS CRITICALLY
LET ME CHECK THE PILE AND THE DESIGN OF YOUR CARPETS HMM, NOT VERY GOOD I'M AFRAID
EVEN FIVE THOUSAND IS TOO MUCH FOR THESE INFERIOR QUALITY CARPETS
YES, YOU ARE RIGHT. WE SHOULDN'T PAY MORE THAN THREE THOUSAND
WELL, IF THAT'S THE MAXIMUM YOU ARE READY TO PAY, I'LL HAVE TO ACCEPT IT.
AGREED. WE'LL COME TOMORROW TO COLLECT THE GOODS AND PAY THE MONEY
NOW THE TWO WENT TO THE INN WHERE THE TRADER WAS STAYING
I HEARD YOU HAVE BROUGHT GOODS WORTH 10,000 FOR SALE
THEY ARE THE FINEST OF CARPETS
WELL, THE DEMAND FOR CARPETS IS RATHER LOW. WILL YOU SELL FOR FIVE THOUSAND?
WHAAAT?!



NEVER
AGAIN
THOUSAND. I WILL SELL THEM ONLY AT A PROFIT, NOT OTHERWISE
BOATMAN AND THE TRADER CAME TO THE COURT
SO, WHO IS THE OWNER OF THESE
I, SIR.
NO, THEY ARE MINE
THE OARSMEN TO THE COURT AND CALLED THEM ASIDE
I KNOW YOUR SECRET ADMIT, OR ELSE...
AS HE HAD EXPECTED, THE SCARED OARSMEN BLURTED OUT THE TRUTH
25 RUPEES EACH TO SAY
YES, THAT IS TRUE
HIM RS 500 TO THE STATE
RS 500 AS FINE


LIMITS OF LOYALTY
THERE WAS NOTHING AKBAR LOVED MORE THAN CHALLENGING BIRBAL. ONE DAY IN THE COURT —
BIRBAL, I WANT YOU TO FIND THE MOST LOYAL AND THE MOST UNGRATEFUL CREATURE ON EARTH
YES, HUZOOR.
DON'T JUST SAY YES YOU MUST PRESENT THEM IN THE DURBAR TOMORROW, OR ELSE...
AS YOU PLEASE
BIRBAL AGREED TO DO AS ASKED. BUT ON GOING HOME, HIS DAUGHTER SAID —
FATHER, YOU SEEM TO BE WORRIED. YOU'VE BEEN STARING AT THE CEILING FOR THE LAST HALF HOUR.
YES, I AM A LITTLE DISTURBED
IS IT A PROBLEM POSED BY THE EMPEROR?
YES, HE WANTS ME TO BRING HIM THE MOST LOYAL AND THE MOST UNGRATEFUL CREATURE BY TOMORROW MORNING


HOW CAN I LOCATE THEM SO FAST?
DON'T WORRY, FATHER SLEEP PEACEFULLY. I'LL GIVE YOU BOTH THESE IN THE MORNING
BIRBAL HAD TRUST IN THE MATURE INTELLIGENCE OF HIS DAUGHTER, AND SLEPT SOUNDLY
NEXT MORNING—
GET READY FOR COURT, FATHER.
BUT THOSE TWO..
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TAKE WITH YOU, YOUR SON-IN-LAW AND OUR DOG, MOTI
YES, OF COURSE WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF IT EARLIER?
BIRBAL ARRIVED IN THE DURBAR WITH HIS SON-IN LAW AND HIS PET DOG
WHAT IS THIS, BIRBAL? WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT YOUR DOG? DON'T YOU HAVE ANY RESPECT FOR THE DURBAR?


ON YOUR INSTRUCTIONS, HUZOOR.
MINE?
YES, YOU HAD ASKED ME TO BRING YOU THE MOST LOYAL CREATURE.
SO YOU BROUGHT A DOG?
YES, IF YOU GIVE A STRAY DOG EVEN A MORSEL OF FOOD, HE WILL BE EVER SO GRATEFUL.
HE WILL PROBABLY FOLLOW YOU EVERYWHERE LIKE A SHADOW.
HMM. PERHAPS YOU ARE RIGHT BUT THE OTHER ONE...?
YOU MEAN THE UNGRATEFUL WRETCH. HERE HE IS.
BUT THAT IS YOUR SON-IN-LAW.
YES, HE REPRESENTS ALL SONS-IN-LAW. NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU GIVE THEM, THEY ARE NEVER SATISFIED.
THAT'S TRUE, BIRBAL.

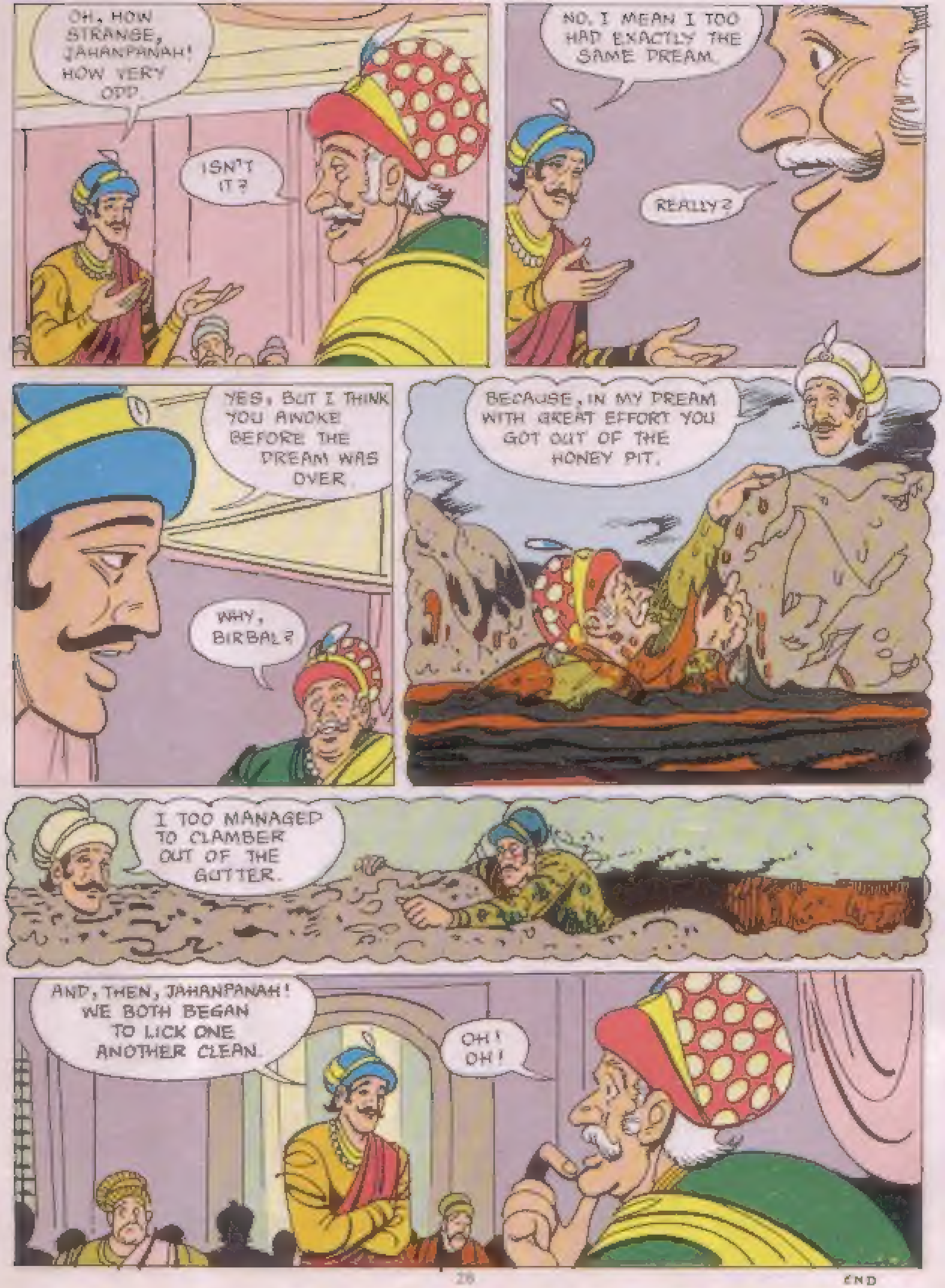

BUT WE MUST THEN REWARD THE DOG AND PUNISH THE SON IN LAW
LET THE DOG BE FED SUMPTUOUSLY AS FOR THE SON IN-LAW, LET HIM BE HANGED
BUT - BUT - HUZOOR
NO BUTS, BIRBAL, I BELIEVE IN JUSTICE
SPECIMEN, ONLY A REPRESENTATIVE
SO?
IF YOU DECIDE TO AWARD A PUNISHMENT, ALL OF THEM MUST BE HANGED
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I MEAN, YOU WILL HAVE TO HANG ALL SONS IN LAW.
YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS. EVERYONE OF US IS SOMEBODY'S
IN THAT CASE, LET HIM GO!


AND OFF IT FLEW
AKBAR WAS FOND OF STORIES. HE COULD NOT SLEEP UNLESS HE LISTENED TO A NEW TALE EVERY NIGHT.
ONE BY ONE, HIS COURTIERS WOULD BE SUMMONED.
HURRY UP, ASIM. TODAY IT IS YOUR TURN TO TELL A STORY.
AH YES! AND THE KING DOESN'T WANT TO HEAR THE GOOD OLD STORIES. WE MUST TELL NEW TALES TO HIS MAJESTY.
ONE EVENING, IT WAS BIRBAL'S TURN. BIRBAL WOULD SPIN A LONG YARN. EACH TIME HE PAUSED FOR BREATH —
AND THEN?
ALL HE HAS TO SAY IS 'AND THEN?' IT'S MY POOR JAW THAT GETS WEARY TALKING.
I MUST CURE HIM OF THIS HABIT OF HIS. HOW CAN WE FIND END-LESS NEW STORIES EVERY DAY?
BIRBAL WAITED PATIENTLY TILL HIS TURN CAME AGAIN.
COME BIRBAL, I AM FEELING RESTLESS. TELL ME A REALLY LONG STORY TONIGHT.
BIRBAL SETTLED DOWN COMFORTABLY AND BEGAN.
ONE DAY, A RICH FARMER ORDERED A GRANARY TO BE MADE.



HE WANTED THE GRANARY TO BE ABSOLUTELY AIRTIGHT, WITHOUT ANY WINDOW OR VENTILATION.
HMMM.
WHEN THE WHEAT CROP WAS HARVESTED, IT WAS STORED IN THE NEW GRANARY. BUT THERE WAS ONE LITTLE PROBLEM.
WHAT?
HIGH UP ON ONE OF THE WALLS OF THE GRANARY, A SMALL OPENING REMAINED. ONE DAY, A SPARROW CAME, TOOK SOME GRAIN AND FLEW OFF.
THEN?
THEN ANOTHER SPARROW CAME, FILLED HER BEAK WITH GRAIN, AND OFF IT FLEW.
THEN WHAT HAPPENED?
ONE MORE SPARROW MANAGED TO GET IN AND OFF IT FLEW WITH TWO GRAINS OF WHEAT.
BUT WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?
BIRBAL DESCRIBED HOW FIFTY BIRDS HAD GOT INTO THE GRANARY AND FLOWN OFF.
OH COME ON! ENOUGH OF THE SPARROWS PICKING GRAIN!
BUT, JAHANPANAH, THOUSANDS OF BIRDS CAME TO THAT GRANARY. I HAVE MENTIONED ONLY A FEW. ONLY WHEN THE GRANARY IS EMPTY WILL THE STORY MOVE ON.
WHY IT MIGHT TAKE MONTHS OR EVEN YEARS TO COMPLETE THE STORY.
FORGET IT! I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY STORIES.


A SHARED DREAM
ONE DAY IN THE DURBAR OF AKBAR —
BIRBAL, I HAD THE STRANGEST DREAM LAST NIGHT.
WHAT WAS IT, JAHANPANAH?
WE WERE BOTH FLOATING IN THE SKY LIKE CLOUDS.
THEN SUDDENLY WE BOTH FELL DOWN WITH A BANG.
I FELL INTO A BIG PIT FILLED WITH HONEY.
BUT YOU, BIRBAL, FELL INTO A GUTTER.
HUH!


OH, HOW STRANGE, JAHANPANAH! HOW VERY ODD.
ISN'T IT?
NO, I MEAN I TOO HAD EXACTLY THE SAME DREAM.
REALLY?
YES, BUT I THINK YOU AWOKE BEFORE THE DREAM WAS OVER.
WHY, BIRBAL?
BECAUSE, IN MY DREAM WITH GREAT EFFORT YOU GOT OUT OF THE HONEY PIT.
I TOO MANAGED TO CLAMBER OUT OF THE GUTTER.
AND, THEN, JAHANPANAH! WE BOTH BEGAN TO LICK ONE ANOTHER CLEAN.
OH! OH!



END